



Samurai of the Wood-Cutting School



Among the last generations of samurai was a teacher named Yamaoka Tesshu. At his dojo, he would have students spend the entire first year perfecting the overhand chop. This was full-time study – and an entire year spent practicing the same move every day.

Critics of Tesshu dubbed his dojo “The wood-cutting school” because of this practice. There may have even been a reference to this as a double-entendre in Akira Kurosawa’s movie *Seven Samurai*; when we are introduced to Heihachi Hayashida he is chopping wood, later he introduces himself as a samurai “of the wood-cutting school.”



Ridiculous as it sounds, now and in his own time, Tesshu understood the importance of perfecting even the smallest actions. By having his students repeat the same action for a year, day in and day out, they could subconsciously execute the stroke with incredible strength and perfect technique, without even thinking about it.

As Christians, we too are called to perfect even the smallest things in our lives. “Little white lies” are still untruthfulness. Immodesty or theft of small things is still breaking the commandments. Even if it means revisiting the same virtue, or addressing the same weakness, day in and day out, year after year, we should daily devote ourselves to overcoming the person we were the day before.

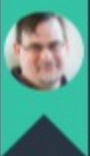


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Paul Nowak is a husband and father of 7, who also happens to be a writer and author. He has written [The Way of the Christian Samurai](#) among [other books](#).

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